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SUBJECT An Interview with Urie Dan

Mossad TOM BROKAW: Most of us have heard of the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency, and Russia's KGB. Those are the intelligence communities of the two superpowers. Well, a lot of people may not have heard of something call the ~~MASAD~~ *Mossad* (1). And yet the MASAD, as much as anything else that has been done in the last 30 or 40 years, has been responsible for the survival of Israel. It is the intelligence arm of the state of Israel.

Urie Dan is the co-author of a book on the ~~MASAD~~ *Mossad*. He knows many of the men and women in that intelligence service, and, as a journalist on Israel's largest newspaper, he has written on its exploits, as well as the other better known military and intelligence activities of the state of Israel.

Mr. Dan, you write in your book that the MASAD was responsible for so many things, and, in contemporary history, you can make the claim that it was responsible for the success of Camp David as well, or in part.

URIE DAN: Well, I would say that one cannot think about the happening of Camp David without thinking about the happening, something that happened a year ago, one month after Mr. Begin came to power as the Prime Minister of Israel. One day a file was laid there on his desk. And it contained top information about a possible plot against Sadat, against President Sadat of Egypt, probably even a plot to assassinate him by Palestinians, backed by Libyans and the Soviets. He asked his aides what usually one should do with such material. The answer was usually we transfer it to the Americans. His answer was "Why not to give it directly to President Sadat." This was a very -- this was a command, after all. And it is extraordinary

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as it is that two states, which were in a formal situation of war, one head of state, Mr. Begin decides to transmit and to alert the chief of the enemy state about a plot against him.

BROKAW: Do you think it helped make it possible for what we have seen in Camp David this week to finally be achieved because of the feeling that Sadat may have had for Begin as a result of that gesture?

DAN: Well, I'll say that this extraordinary story explains how credibility was built between Begin and Sadat on the first time, and then it explains better the fantastic visit of President Sadat in Jerusalem, which enabled, in the end, the successful summit at Camp David.

So intelligence from time to time doesn't serve only war; it served the cause of peace. And this was important in this case.

BROKAW: Now there is, and there has been established for some time now, a special relationship between the MASAD and the United States. You make a rather remarkable early on in your book. You say that somewhere in the United States there are two squadrons of Russian airplanes that have been provided this country by the MASAD.

DAN: Well, I explain -- we explain in our book, The MASAD, Israel, facing the most modern Soviet armaments supplied to Arab states, worked there to try to study very carefully and to trace every development of Russian weaponry. For that reason, the fantastic story which we detail in our book, The MASAD, how the Mig 21 was brought to Israel by a defector pilot who was persuaded to do it, an Iraqi, and enabled the Israelis to study this most, at that time, modern Soviet fighter, jet fighter, and enabled us to win those aerial victories during the Six Day War. On the other hand, one should state that Israel, having close relations with the United States, contributed a lot, as Mr. Begin, the Israeli Prime Minister, stated last year to the national security of the United States. He has not elaborated, but we are elaborating in our book that some kinds of weaponry, missile systems, electronic gear, aircrafts were supplied by Israel to the United States.

BROKAW: Very briefly, how many MASAD agents are in operation within the United States?

DAN: Well, I think one should understand that this question has no basis, because America is the most friendly country to Israel.

BROKAW: But still, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect that there are MASAD agents at work here for intelli-

gence that they could gather, maybe not so much about America, but about Arab activities that take place on this soil?

DAN: I don't believe so. I don't believe. I don't believe that anybody will be stupid to try and torpedo or endanger fantastic relations between the two countries, like the superpower America and the small Israel, you know, just for the sake of things you have mentioned just now.

BROKAW: The MASAD operates really on the basis of intellectual abilities, doesn't it? It doesn't have a kind of James Bond appearance about it. I mean these are....

DAN: Well, I think this is a very important part of the success of Israel's intelligence community. As we explain in our book, The MASAD, the intelligence community is built, first of all, on very regular human beings, the anti-James Bond characters. One can imagine a MASAD agent, like Elie Coll, who was hanged in Damascus, or Wolfgang Lotts (?), an Israeli, who, under cover of a German, penetrated the inner circles of the German scientists in Egypt, just as very dedicated people who can be immediately part of the crowd. And use that simple word, give content to this simple word "intelligence," using the brain.

BROKAW: Very briefly, in 1968, a freighter loaded with uranium, disappeared from the Mediterranean. A lot of people believe that it was snatched either by the MASAD or that it was a cover for the MASAD. Was it?

DAN: Well, we are dealing in our book with the boats from Cherbourg, the missile boats, the way they were smuggled from France to Israel. I think that is an interesting story in our book, The MASAD.

BROKAW: You won't tell me about the uranium.

DAN: Well, I cannot tell you anything that I don't know.

BROKAW: All right.

Here now is Gene Shalit. Gene?